

Election Procedures Review  
Of  
**Klickitat County**  
State of Washington  
2006 Primary Election



Conducted by the  
Office of the Secretary of State  
Election Certification and Training Program



# Introduction

The Washington State Legislature enacted legislation in 1992 mandating that the Office of the Secretary of State review county election procedures and practices. The Election Certification and Training Program was established within the Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of State to conduct reviews and to provide for the certification of election administrators. In 2005, the Legislature expanded the Election Certification and Training Program to require that each County Auditor's Office be reviewed at least once every three years. They also added a requirement for the Program to conduct a follow-up visit to verify the county has taken the steps they listed to correct the problems noted in the report.

The election review process is governed by RCW 29A.04.510 through 29A.04.590 and Chapter 434-260 of the Washington Administrative Code. Reviews are conducted at regular intervals in conjunction with a county primary, special or general election, at the direction of the Secretary of State.

Pursuant to RCW 29A.04.570(1)(b), the Election Certification and Training Program conducted an election review in Klickitat County during the 2006 Primary Election cycle. Sheryl Moss, Certification and Training Program Manager, represented the Election Certification and Training Program during the review. Dede Pafford, Klickitat County Auditor, Connie Kayser and other members of the staff participated on behalf of the Klickitat County Auditor's Office. While Ms. Pafford was Auditor during the Primary, she was unable to finish the review process. Brenda Sorenson became Auditor after the 2006 General Election and is the current Auditor at the time of this report.

Klickitat County allowed the reviewer to thoroughly review and examine all aspects of the election processes. The county provided documentation and materials during the review which greatly contributed to a successful examination process.

Both the reviewer and the Klickitat County Auditor's Office approached the review in a spirit of cooperation. The State commends the Klickitat County Auditor's Office for its organization and preparation in making the review process a positive and useful experience.

Contents of this report are based on observations of election practices and procedures and on interviews with county election personnel. The reviewer obtained information based on the actual observation of a particular procedure, based on verbal explanation or written procedures. In all cases, the predominant concern is whether or not the county's actions constitute compliance with the intent of statutes and rules.

The purpose of this review report is to provide Klickitat County Auditor's Office with a useful evaluation of its election procedures and policies and to encourage procedural consistency in the administration of elections throughout the state. This review report includes a series of recommendations and/or suggestions that are intended to assist Klickitat County in improving and enhancing its election processes.

The reviewer is statutorily prohibited from making any evaluation, finding, or recommendation regarding the validity of any primary or election or of any canvass of the election returns. Consequently, this review report should not be interpreted as affecting, in any way, the validity of the outcome of any election or of any canvass of election returns.

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# Overview

In the course of this review, the reviewer observed pre-election tasks, election procedures, post-election procedures, canvassing, and certification of the election. The County Auditor or election staff verbally explained some tasks the reviewer was unable to observe.

Klickitat County has experienced a large turnover in personnel recently. Klickitat County has had three County Auditors and three Election Supervisors in the past two years. Additionally, the Election Staff has been unable to regularly attend trainings and has found it difficult to replace the certified election administrators. In spite of these difficulties, emphasis has continued to be placed on election management integrity.

Klickitat County has had difficulty keeping up with the numerous election law and rule changes in the last two years. All counties in Washington State have experienced the same difficulty. While Klickitat County has not been able to implement every law and rule change, the procedures essential to the integrity of an election remain intact.

The recommendations and suggestions found in this report may be addressed with increased attendance at election training workshops and conferences. The Election Staff will also benefit from visits to other counties to gather ideas to streamline their operation.

The following recommendations and suggestions should help improve and enhance Klickitat County's election policies and procedures.

# Recommendations

The following recommendations indicate areas where the county is out of compliance with the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), the Washington State Constitution, or Federal election law. The reviewer provides a description of the county's procedure, a citation of the applicable law, and a recommendation based on the citation.

## Precinct Boundaries

Most precinct boundaries appear to follow the township and range lines. High Prairie, East Lyle, Columbus, and River Precinct boundaries do not appear to be compact.

*RCW 29A.16.050 states in part, "... (2) Every voting precinct shall be composed, as nearly as practicable, of contiguous and compact areas.*

*(3) Except as provided in this subsection, changes to the boundaries of any precinct shall follow visible, physical features delineated on the most current maps provided by the United States census bureau..."*

**Recommendation:** Whenever Klickitat County changes precinct lines in the future, the lines should follow visible, physical features (such as rivers, streets, power lines, etc.) and the areas of the precincts should be compact and contiguous.

## Ballot Proofing

On the Primary ballot, two positions were listed that should only have appeared on the General Election ballot—PUD Commissioner and District Court Judge. The error was discovered before Election Day and any votes cast on these offices were not tabulated.

*RCW 29A.52.220 states in part, "(1) No primary may be held for any single position in any city, town, district, or district court, as required by RCW 29A.52.210, if, after the last day allowed for candidates to withdraw, there are no more than two candidates who filed for the position...."*

**Recommendation:** Prior to each fall, the Election Staff should review the ballot requirements for each office. Ballots should be proofed by several different people to detect errors in printing ballots.

## Polling Places

**HAVA Poster** Of the polling places visited, several did not post the HAVA poster. One poll site did not have the flag displayed.

*WAC 434-253-025 states "The following items must be posted or displayed at each polling place while it is open:*

- (1) United States Flag;*
- (2) HAVA voter information poster..."*

**Recommendation:** At each poll worker training, emphasize the importance of making sure all required signs are displayed so that voters may easily see them.

**Auditor's Office** The Auditor's Office did not employ all the elements of a polling place, even though a disability access unit was set up in the office.

*WAC 434-250-330 states in part, "(1) For elections conducted entirely by mail, services that would have been provided at the **polling place** must, at a minimum, be provided at the county auditor's office, including provisional ballots. Such services must be provided beginning the date that ballots are mailed to voters. Identification must be provided in compliance with RCW 29A.44.205 and WAC 434-253-055, except in the case of replacement ballots as authorized by RCW 29A.48.040. If the auditor does not maintain poll books at the auditor's office, the voter must sign a log sheet that includes the same information that would have appeared in a poll book..."*

**Recommendation:** The Auditor's Office is a poll site under this WAC and should have all the posters, logs, etc. required for a poll site.

**Polling Place Supplies** The polling place supply list did not include a United States Flag, ballot stub envelope, sample ballot, emergency plan, voting equipment instructions, HAVA poster, or voter registration forms. These items may have been supplied to the poll workers, but when the items do not appear on the list, poll workers would not know they are required and would not know to notify the Auditor if they are missing.

*WAC 434-253-020 states in part: "Polling place supplies shall be provided, at a minimum, with the following supplies at every election:*

- ...(6) United States flag;*
- ...(10) Voting equipment instructions;*
- ...(14) Ballot Stub Envelope;*
- (15) Emergency Plan of Action;*
- (16) Either sample ballots or voters' pamphlets;*
- (17) HAVA voter information poster*
- (18) Voter registration forms..."*

**Recommendation:** Add these items to the poll site supply list and make sure they are included in the supplies.

**Disability Access Units** The poll worker training manual states "...If the poll book shows a voter received an absentee ballot, they may not use the DAU..."

*WAC 434.250.095 states, "If a voter who was issued an absentee or mail ballot requests to vote on a direct recording electronic voting device, the county auditor must first confirm that the voter has not already returned a voted ballot. Confirmation that the voter has not already returned a voted ballot may be achieved by accessing the county voter registration system by electronic, telephonic, or other means. If the county auditor is unable to confirm that the voter has not already returned a voted ballot, the voter may not vote on a direct recording electronic voting device.*

*Consistent with RCW 29A.46.110, in order to prevent multiple voting, the voter must be immediately credited or otherwise flagged as having voted. If a voted absentee or mail ballot is returned after a ballot is cast on the direct recording electronic voting device, the absentee or mail ballot must not be counted."*

**Recommendation:** A procedure should be set up for poll workers to call the Auditor’s Office if an absentee voter requests to use the disability access unit at the polls. The voter’s record should be checked. If the absentee ballot has not yet been returned, the voter should be allowed to use the disability access unit and the voter should be credited for voting in the election management system to ensure that the absentee ballot would not be counted if it is returned.

**Ballot Accountability Form** There are two accountability forms used at the polls—one for regular optical scan ballots and one for provisional ballots. Neither form nor a combination of the two forms contain all the elements required. The parts missing are listed below.

*WAC 434-253-165 states in part, “...The county auditor shall provide a ballot accountability sheet with each list of registered voters for each precinct or combination of precincts, upon which shall be recorded, at a minimum, the following information:*

*...(7) the number of ballots listed on each direct recording device;*

*...(15) The number of absentee ballots accepted at the poll site;*

*(16) The total number of ballots returned to the county auditor; and*

*(17) The total number of ballots accounted for*

*...Discrepancies must be reported and explained by the precinct election officers.*

*The precinct election officers shall attest to the accuracy of the ballot accountability sheet by each signing in the paces provided.*

**Recommendation:** A single ballot accountability form should be used. The form should incorporate all the elements listed in WAC 434-253-165.

**Voter Registration Challenge Form** The voter registration challenge form does not include all the required elements.

*WAC 434-324-115 states, “All county auditors and the secretary of state shall furnish to the public on request forms substantially similar to the sample included below for the purpose of allowing a registered voter to challenge the registration of another voter pursuant to RCW 29A.08.810 through 29A.08.850...”*

**Recommendation:** The form should be in substantially the same form as found in WAC 434-324-115.

### **Political Observers**

Klickitat County requests observers from each major political party prior to processing ballots. They do not tell the political parties how many observers are needed. Additionally, they do not offer training for observers before each Primary and General Election.

*WAC 434-261-020 states in part, “...Prior to the primary or election, the county auditor shall determine the number of **observers** required in order to observe all aspects of the counting center proceedings, and shall request, in writing, that each major political party appoint representatives to fill the requirements. Where more than one observer is to be appointed, the political party shall designate one of their **observers** as supervisor. Counting center **observers** shall be provided training with respect to ballot processing procedures and the vote tallying system as required by RCW 29A.12.120...”*

*RCW 29A.12.120 states in part, “(1) Before each state primary or general election at which voting systems are to be used, the county auditor shall instruct all precinct election officers appointed under RCW 29A.44.410, counting center personnel, and political party observers designated under RCW 29A.60.170 in the proper conduct of their duties...”*

**Recommendation:** Klickitat County should determine the number of observers needed to adequately cover each step of ballot processing. This number and when they will be needed should be added to the request to political parties for observers. The date and time of the county’s observer training should also be included in the letter. This training should be offered before each Primary and General Election, even if no one attends.

### **Absentee Ballots**

**Special Absentee Ballots** According to the procedures manual, only those voters who are out of the country are entitled to receive a special absentee ballot.

*RCW 29A.40.050 states in part, “...An auditor shall provide a special absentee ballot only to a registered voter who completes an application stating that he or she will be unable to vote and return a regular ballot by normal mail delivery within the period provided for regular absentee ballots...”*

**Recommendation:** Special absentee ballots should be provided to any voter filling out a special absentee ballot request form.

**Hospital Absentee Ballots** In the procedures manual, voters in a healthcare facility must have a signed letter from a hospital administrator to receive a ballot on Election Day.

*WAC 434-250-030 states in part, “...(4) As authorized by RCW 29A.40.080, requests for an absentee ballot may be made by a resident of a health care facility, as defined by RCW 70.37.020 (3). Each county shall provide an application form for such a registered voter to apply for a single absentee ballot by messenger on election day. The messenger may pick up the voter’s absentee ballot and deliver it to the voter and return it to the county auditor’s office...”*

**Recommendation:** A letter from a hospital administrator is no longer required to receive a ballot on Election Day. The procedures manual should be changed to reflect current practice.

**Instructions.** Absentee ballot instructions did not include how to obtain a replacement ballot, or additional language required for forwarded ballots.

*WAC 434-250-040 requires in part: “(1) In addition to the instructions required by chapters 29A.36 and 29A.40 RCW, instructions for properly voting and returning an absentee ballots must also include:*

*...(e) How to obtain a replacement ballot if the original ballot is destroyed, spoiled, or lost...”*

*RCW 29A.40.091 states in part: “...If the county auditor chooses to forward absentee ballots, he or she must include with the ballot a clear explanation of the qualifications necessary to vote in that election and must advise a voter with questions about his or her eligibility to contact the county auditor. This explanation may be provided on the ballot envelope, on an enclosed insert, or printed directly on the ballot itself. If the information is not included, the envelope must clearly indicate that the ballot is not to be forwarded and return postage is guaranteed.”*



**Recommendation:** Add the two required parts to the absentee ballot instructions. The county reports that these are now included on the instructions printed on the ballot.

**Unsigned Absentee Ballots** The Elections Department correctly sends an oath to all voters who neglect to sign their voted ballot envelope. The letter asking the voter to respond gave the voter until September 26 to sign an oath so the ballot may be counted. The letter should have given the voter until September 28.

*RCW 29A.60.165(1)(b) states that the voter “Sign a copy of the envelope provided by the auditor, and return it to the auditor no later than the day before the certification of the primary or election.”*

**Recommendation:** Any communication with voters about unsigned or unmatched signatures on absentee ballot envelopes should give the voter until the day before certification to correct the problem.

**Affidavit of Physical Inability to Sign Ballot** This form is included in the poll worker training manual as a form to use if a voter cannot sign their name.

*WAC 434-253-050 states, “Whenever a registered voter's name appears in the poll book or precinct list but the voter is unable to sign his/her name, the precinct election officer shall require the person offering to vote to be identified by another registered voter and issued a ballot. The ballot shall be processed in the same manner as other regularly voted ballots. In the event that the person offering to vote cannot be identified by another registered voter, the precinct election officer shall issue the person a provisional ballot. Such provisional ballots shall be referred to the county canvassing board. The precinct election officer shall note on the poll book that the voter could not sign their name. The county auditor shall verify after election day that the voter's registration reflects the voter's inability to sign. The county auditor shall request an updated signature for those voters without current signatures on file.*

**Recommendation:** Klickitat County should not use the affidavit. They should follow the procedure provided for in WAC 434-253-050.

**Replacement Ballots.** Klickitat County required voters to fill out a replacement ballot affidavit before a replacement ballot could be issued.

*RCW 29A.40.061 states in part, “...(2) A registered voters may obtain a replacement ballot if the ballot is destroyed, spoiled, lost, or not received by the voter. The voter may obtain the ballot by telephone request, by mail, electronically, or in person....”*

**Recommendation:** Klickitat County should treat requests for replacement ballots the same as original requests for absentee ballots. This practice was discontinued after the reviewer discussed the issue with Elections Staff.

**Faxing Voted Ballots.** The procedures manual did not include a secrecy waiver for voters faxing voted ballots.

*WAC 434-208-060 states in part, “In addition to those documents specified by RCW 29A.04.255, the secretary of state or the county auditor shall accept and file in his or her office electronic*

*facsimile transmissions of the following documents...(4) Voted ballots, provided the voter agrees to waive the secrecy of his or her ballot.”*

**Recommendation:** The option of returning a voted ballot electronically should not be included as an option in the military ballot instructions. Voters requesting to send their ballot electronically should be provided with a waiver of secrecy to sign and include with their electronic ballot.

### **Voter Cancellations**

When absentee envelopes are returned with a notation that a voter is deceased, they cancel the registration.

*RCW 29A.08.510 states in part, “...each county auditor may also use newspaper obituary articles as a source of information in order to cancel voter’s registration...any registered voter may sign a statement, subject to the penalties of perjury, to the effect that to his or her personal knowledge or belief another registered voters is deceased...”*

**Recommendation:** RCW 29A.08.510 specifically lists the ways a voter may be cancelled. Writing the information on an absentee envelope does not meet the requirements of this statute. This procedure should be discontinued; voter registrations should only be canceled for the reasons listed in statute.

### **Election Certification**

Klickitat County prepared a reconciliation report and submitted it with the certification of the Primary as required by law. Upon checking the reconciliation, the absentee numbers did not add up correctly.

*RCW 29A.60.235 states in part, “(1) The county auditor shall prepare, make publicly available at the auditor’s office or on the auditor’s web site, and submit at the time of certification an election reconciliation report...”*

**Recommendation:** The reconciliation report is intended to account for all ballots received by the county auditor. The number of ballots received should equal the number counted plus the number rejected. If the numbers do not match, the county should indicate why. This process is extremely important. It verifies that all ballots that should have been counted were counted. Klickitat County should verify all the numbers on the reconciliation form are correct before submitting it to their county canvassing board to be included with the official results.

# Suggestions

The following are suggestions for increasing efficiency and improving operations within the County Auditor's Office. Although these suggestions do not address issues involving compliance with state laws or administrative rules, the reviewer identified the tasks as areas of election administration in which the County Auditor might improve the efficiency and operation of the office.

## **Procedures Manual**

A current procedures manual is an invaluable tool for election administration, especially when the county experiences turnover in personnel. Klickitat County has a good start on a procedures manual, however much of it is out of date. There are also many more areas in election administration that need to be covered, so continuing to expand the manual is important.

**Suggestion:** The reviewer has the following suggestions to improve the procedures manual:

1. Include all parts of the elections and voter registration administration, including the disability access units.
2. Quoting state law/rule and using paragraphs to describe a procedure make it difficult for the inexperienced user. Procedures should be detailed enough that a very inexperienced person can accomplish the task by simply following the manual. A step by step format is very effective. Testing the procedure using staff members from other divisions is a good indication if the procedure has been adequately written.
3. It appears that the procedures in the manual have been copied from another county. While there is nothing wrong with borrowing another county's procedures, they should be altered to fit the actual practice of your county.
4. The procedures need to be updated to reflect current law. One of the most difficult tasks is keeping a procedures manual up to date with changes in law or rule and changes in actual practice. The reviewer suggests an annual review of all procedures to ensure they are kept current.

## **Ballot Proofing**

Klickitat County experienced a problem with the use of color on the ballots. The blue tint prevented Republican votes from being correctly read on the ballot tabulation system. The Republican votes had to be hand tallied.

**Suggestion:** When ballots are received from the printer, they should be proofed extensively and tested on the vote tabulation system before being sent to absentee voters. If the ballots had been checked on the tabulation system, the problem with the color printing would have been detected earlier.

### **Poll Worker Training**

Klickitat County provided eight hours of comprehensive training for poll workers. They are to be commended for the hands on training regarding the disability access units. Much of the other training, however, did not relate specifically to the responsibilities of the poll workers.

A large portion of the poll worker training included how ballots are processed after they are delivered to the courthouse—both poll site and absentee. While the information provided was correct, there was so much information it was difficult for the poll workers to absorb it all especially all the new changes in law. The additional information, in the opinion of the reviewer, made it difficult for poll workers to define their specific duties.

**Suggestion:** Only include information specific to the responsibilities of the poll workers in their training.

### **Polling Places**

**Polling Place Supplies** Of the supplies provided for poll workers some of the signs and the Absentee Ballot Inspection Board Oath were very out of date. Some dated back to when ballots were hand counted at the polls.

**Suggestion:** The Elections Department needs to review the signs sent to each poll site to make sure they are still valid under state law and rule.

**Voter Turnout** Voter turnout at each polling place visited had a very small number of poll site voters and the turnout at these locations was very small. Additionally, there is difficulty recruiting poll workers, transmitting election results and other aspects of providing poll sites. A substantial percentage of the ballots cast in the Primary were cast by mail.

**Suggestion:** The reviewer suggests that converting to all mail elections would be more efficient and provide a better use of the county's resources.

**Provisional Ballot Envelopes** Klickitat County's provisional ballot envelopes did not contain an oath.

WAC 434-253-045 states in part: "...At a minimum, the following information is required to be printed on the outer provisional ballot envelope:

(7) The following oath with a place for the voter to sign and date:

*I do solemnly swear or affirm under penalty of perjury that:*

*I am a legal resident of the state of Washington;*

*I am entitled to vote in this election;*

*I have not already voted in this election;*

*It is illegal to vote if I am not a United States citizen;*

*It is illegal to vote if I have been convicted of a felony and have not had my voting rights restored;*

*It is illegal to cast a ballot or sign an absentee envelope on behalf of another voter, except as otherwise provided by law; and*

*Attempting to vote when not entitled, attempting to vote more than once, or falsely signing this oath is a felony punishable by a maximum imprisonment of five years, a maximum fine of \$10,000, or both Signature\_Date”*

**Suggestion:** The oath should be added to the provisional ballot envelope. Additionally, the absentee information printed on the secrecy envelope should be removed.

### **Ballot Duplication**

Ballots were duplicated using four staff members. Two people duplicated and two people watched. Two separate logs were used for duplicated ballots. The duplication information was correctly written on each ballot and on the duplicate ballot stub. The stub was stapled to the original ballot. The entire process was long and complicated; it took more than one hour to process approximately 25 ballots from the Canvassing Board.

**Suggestion:** Klickitat County meets and greatly exceeds state law requirements for ballot duplication. Two staff members are adequate to duplicate ballots. Only one log is needed—the log kept by precinct can be eliminated. The duplicate ballot stub does not need to be kept and serves no purpose when stapled to the original. The time and steps needed for duplication could be greatly reduced.

### **Write-in Votes**

Write-in votes were tallied for each candidate as absentee ballots were inspected. These tallied votes were retained as part of the canvass.

*RCW 29A.60.021 states in part “...(3)...These votes need not be tabulated unless: (a) the difference between the number of votes cast for the candidate apparently qualified to appear on the general election ballot or elected and the candidate receiving the next highest number of votes is less than the sum of the total number of write-in votes cast for the office plus the overvotes and undervotes recorded by the vote tabulating system; or (b) a manual recount is conducted for that office.*

*“(4) Write-in votes cast for an individual candidate for an office whose name does not appear on the ballot need not be tallied unless the total number of write-in votes and undervotes recorded by the vote tabulation system for the office is great than the number of votes cast for the candidate apparently qualified to appear on the general election ballot or elected.....”*

**Suggestion:** The Diebold ballot tabulation system used by Klickitat County counts the number of write-in votes, overvotes, and undervotes cast for each position automatically. Write-ins need not be tabulated unless the printed unofficial results indicate the number of write-ins plus the number of overvotes and undervotes in a position could make a difference in the outcome of a race.

### **Election Facilities**

The reviewer believes the space assigned to the Elections Division is inadequate and could contribute to staff errors in all parts of the process.

The area upstairs is very cramped and the Election Supervisor must use her desk area for part of the ballot tabulation system.

This same area is also used for processing all voter registration transactions, checking signatures on absentee ballots, and other responsibilities. Space limitations affect the ability of the staff to be organized. While the reviewer did not note any errors as a result of the space issue, it could cause the staff to lose track of vital information or cause errors in the process.

Additionally, the basement ballot processing room is not very accessible to observers. The walkway to the room is hazardous due to pipes hanging low from the ceiling. The ballot processing room is not large enough to process the increasing number of absentee and mail ballots. The room also has open pipes in the ceiling which could cause irreparable damage if they should leak.

**Suggestion:** The County should look at relocating the entire Elections Division into an office space that will adequately allow organized processing of voter registration and administration of elections. Such space should be large enough to provide for a separate space for the ballot tabulation system, and room to clearly organize voter registration and ballot processing.

### **Election Night Reception Board**

Each poll site brought their ballots and supplies to the basement loading dock for check in. Two staff members filled out two forms for each poll site; one was filled out with a carbon sheet to make a copy for the inspector to take with them. This process appeared to be disorganized and time consuming.

**Suggestion:** A simple check off list would be sufficient to indicate the supplies and ballots had been delivered. The inspector does not need to receive a receipt. A log of the seal numbers on the ballots and supplies can be utilized later when the ballots are removed for storage.

### **Election Calendar**

Klickitat County has an election calendar containing to track the progress of tasks required during an election.

**Suggestion:** The reviewer would like to see more detailed steps included in the election calendar. For instance, instead of listing the deadline for something to be finished, also include when the item should be started. There are also other pieces of the process that could be added. If these items are added to the list, the calendar will be an invaluable tool to ensuring that all parts of an election are accomplished.

### **Forms**

**Notice to Inactive Voters** Instead of a ballot, Klickitat County sends a form to each inactive voter. If the inactive voter wants to receive a ballot, the voter is to fill out the form and return it to the County Auditor.

**Suggestion:** Various aspects of this form need to be changed:

- There are several reasons why a voter was placed on inactive status. The wording on the form indicates the only reason is that the voter has moved. All other reasons should be included on the form.
- If a voter moved within the 30 days prior to an election, they still may vote at their old location.

- The form only states they will be transferred or cancelled if they return the form with a new address. The option to receive a ballot in their previous jurisdiction should be included.
- At the bottom of the return section, there is a statement “PLEASE CANCEL MY VOTER REGISTRATION, I HAVE MOVED OUT OF THE COUNTY” with no box to check this statement. The voter may think that the form is to cancel their voter registration instead of requesting a ballot. This should be clarified.

**Application for Ongoing Absentee Ballot** Four reasons for canceling ongoing voter status are listed on the form. One reason was not listed—Upon placing a voter on inactive status. The reasons no longer have to be listed on the application form.

**Suggestion:** While it is OK to list the reasons ongoing status would be cancelled, if they are listed on the form, all five reasons should be listed. The county should either list all five reasons or take them all off the form.

### **Election Certification**

Klickitat County prepared a reconciliation report and submitted it with the certification of the Primary as required by law. Upon checking the reconciliation, the absentee numbers did not add up correctly.

*RCW 29A.60.235 states in part, “(1) The county auditor shall prepare, make publicly available at the auditor’s office or on the auditor’s web site, and submit at the time of certification an election reconciliation report...”*

**Recommendation:** The reconciliation report is intended to account for all ballots received by the county auditor. The number of ballots received should equal the number counted plus the number rejected. If the numbers do not match, the county should indicate why. This process is extremely important. It verifies that all ballots that should have been counted were counted. Klickitat County should verify all the number on the reconciliation form are correct before submitting it to their county canvassing board to be included with the official results.

## **County's Response to Draft Review Report**

The Election Certification and Training Program issued a Draft Review Report to the Klickitat County Canvassing Board in March 2007. In accordance with WAC 434-260-145, we provided Klickitat County 10 days to respond, in writing, to recommendations listed in the draft report.

The Klickitat County Canvassing Board provided the following response to the Draft Review Report. The signed original of their response is on file in the Office of the Secretary of State.





RECEIVED

MAR 26 2007

# Klickitat County Auditor

OFFICE OF THE  
SECRETARY OF STATE

FROM THE OFFICE OF: Brenda Sorensen

Licensing • Records & Recording • Elections • Voter Maintenance • Accounting • Payroll

205 S Columbus Ave; Stop 2, Goldendale, WA 98620; Ph 509-773-4001 Fax 509-773-4244

March 22, 2007

Sheryl Moss  
Office of the Secretary of State  
Certification and Training Program  
PO Box 40220  
Olympia, WA 98504-0229

Dear Sheryl:

Thank you for reviewing our 2006 Primary Election. Efforts continue to be ongoing with regard to streamlining our electoral process.

We have read the Report; you will find our response attached.

We truly appreciate the continual support from the Secretary of State's Election Division. Their professionalism and efficiency is outstanding.

Our elections staff has a very positive attitude toward their work and continually strives to enhance Klickitat County's electoral process.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brenda Sorensen".

Brenda Sorensen  
Auditor

cc: Tim O'Neill, Prosecuting Attorney  
Ray Thayer, Chair, Board of Commissioners



## *Klickitat County Auditor*

FROM THE OFFICE OF: Brenda Sorensen

Licensing • Records & Recording • Elections • Voter Maintenance • Accounting • Payroll

205 S Columbus Ave; Stop 2, Goldendale, WA 98620; Ph 509-773-4001 Fax 509-773-4244

March 22, 2007

Response to Secretary of State's  
Elections Procedures Review  
for

Klickitat County's September 19, 2006  
Primary Election

### **Overview:**

The Auditor's office has experienced a large turn-over in all areas of the office, including elections. As stated in the review, over the past two years there have been three county auditors, three election supervisors, and three chief deputy auditors. Payroll and licensing have also experienced major employee turn-over. Due to staffing issues in the office, trainings were not always able to be met in many areas of the office.

The Auditor has over 30 years experience working with elections and is a certified elections administrator. The elections supervisor and elections assistant are certified elections assistants. The Chief Deputy Auditor will be eligible to apply for certified elections assistant in July, 2007. With the ongoing training which is being attended, by July, 2007 we will have 4 certified in elections and a fifth employee working towards certification. Hopefully we will be able to alleviate some of the past difficulties experienced in this office.

We appreciate the professionalism and immediate availability of the Secretary of State's staff in helping us reach these goals. Following is our response to our September, 2006 election review.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **Precinct Boundaries:**

In the future, when precinct boundaries are adjusted, we will comply with RCW 29A.16.050 to assure the change creates a contiguous and compact area.

Ballot Proofing:

For all future elections, a minimum of at least two teams of two within the Auditor's office, as well as another county employee who is outside the electoral process, will proof ballot text in an effort to prevent errors.

Polling Places:

Poll Worker training will continue to emphasize the importance of displaying all required signs and posters. It is my understanding that the poll site which did not display their HAVA poster was only provided with a Spanish version in their supplies and opted not to display that poster. Measures have since been taken to ensure all supplies and equipment for each poll site are supplied.

Auditor's Office:

It is recognized that the Auditor's office is a poll site (pursuant to statute). During the February 15, 2007 school district elections, the office was prepared accordingly. This recommendation has been complied with.

Polling Place Supplies:

All books containing forms used by poll workers have been updated. Obsolete and/or duplicate forms have been examined and either removed or revised in an effort to comply with all statutes. This recommendation has been complied with.

Disability Access Units:

We now have a procedure established for instances when a voter who has been issued an absentee ballot comes to a poll site and requests to vote on a disability unit. The procedure has been included in the poll site supplies and equipment and will be included in future poll worker trainings.

Ballot Accountability Form:

The recommendation is to use one form instead of two for ballot accountability for optical scan and provisional ballots. This form has been revised however, we feel additional changes could be made to make the procedure easier for poll workers. We are working to enhance the revised form. It is anticipated this will be done prior to the May 15, 2007 election.

Voter Registration Challenge Form:

This recommendation has been complied with.

Political Observers:

We are diligently working on preparing policies and procedures for training of political observers. We hope to have this in place and offer the required training and noticing for the political parties prior to the August, 2007 Primary Election. This recommendation has not yet been complied with.

Absentee Ballots:

Special Absentee Ballots:

The procedures manual has been updated to allow any voter filling out the request for special ballot to receive one. This recommendation has been complied with.

Hospital Absentee Ballots:

The procedures manual has been updated to allow health care facility residents who are registered voters to request an absentee ballot by messenger. This recommendation has been complied with.

Instructions:

The instructions explaining how to obtain an absentee ballot were correctly provided on the February, 2007 special election ballots. In the future, these instructions will be printed on the security envelopes. This recommendation has been complied with.

Unsigned Absentee Ballot Envelopes:

This form letter has been corrected. This recommendation has been complied with.

Affidavit of Inability to Sign Ballot:

This form has been eliminated from supplies and poll worker training materials. To ensure compliance with State law, our election staff is preparing a procedure for poll workers to follow which addresses how to handle a situation where the voter cannot sign in the poll book. This recommendation has been complied with.

Replacement Ballots:

The Reviewer noted the elections staff discontinued requiring a replacement ballot affidavit in order to process a request for duplicate ballot. We would like to further clarify that currently these requests are treated the same as if they were an original request for absentee ballot. This recommendation has been complied with.

Faxing Voted Ballots:

The option for military ballots to be returned electronically has been removed from the military ballot instructions. We have prepared and include with each ballot sent electronically, a waiver of secrecy which the voter is to sign and include when they return their electronic ballot. This recommendation has been complied with.

Voter Cancellations:

Voter registrations are no longer cancelled based on notations listed on returned absentee ballot envelopes. This recommendation has been complied with.

Election Certification:

The 2006 Primary reconciliation report submitted did not balance due to a written reporting error. Internal procedures have been put into place so that an audit of results will be performed by at least two employees within the office to ensure balancing and proper reporting.

**Suggestions:**

Procedures Manual:

This manual has been updated and will be continually evaluated to include all aspects of elections and voter registration administration. It is our goal to have this completed prior to the August, 2007 Primary Election with an annual review during May and June each year. This would provide for the manual to be updated to comply with laws which were passed during the immediate past legislative session.

Ballot Proofing:

Ballot proofing issues were previously addressed under "Recommendations". Once the ballot proofs are received from the printer, we scan each test ballot through the appropriate Accu-Vote scanner to ensure it is being read properly. Once this has been done, the printer is contacted and requested to print the ballots.

Poll Worker Training:

Our previous poll worker training was long and extremely detailed. We are in the process of changing our training to only include what the poll worker is required to address at the poll site.

Polling Place Supplies:

All supplies were reviewed and updated prior to the February, 2007 special election. It should be noted that following the February, 2007 special election, all supplies and equipment were inspected (precinct by precinct) in preparation for the next election.



**Voter Turnout:**

Although the Auditor's office recognizes a significantly low poll site voter turnout, Klickitat County historically has not supported changing to a vote-by-mail electoral process. We have one precinct that has requested to change to a vote-by-mail precinct. This will be done as this precinct has significantly less than 200 active registered voters. That poll site had 11 voters during the 2006 Primary Election.

The long range plan is to create two Community Poll Sites. One would be in Goldendale and the Centerville precinct would have an option of either going to the Goldendale Community poll site or voting absentee. The second Community Poll Site would be in White Salmon. The Bingen and Husum precincts would have the same option as outlined above for Centerville. This would reduce the number of poll sites from eleven to six (Goldendale and White Salmon Community Poll Sites, Trout Lake, North Dalles, Lyle and the Courthouse). The Glenwood precinct qualifies to be changed to vote-by-mail from poll site. Community meetings would be held along with mail and media communications prior to implementing this long range plan.

**Provisional Ballot Envelopes.**

Although the oath is not on our current stock of provisional ballot envelopes, we will either have it printed on the back of the envelope or reorder envelopes that contain the oath prior to the May 15, 2007 special election.

**Ballot Duplication:**

The process used for ballot duplication far exceeded what the State requirements are. Ballot duplication has been streamlined and is performed by two staff members who record the duplication process on one log (pursuant to statute).

**Write-in Votes**

The process of tallying write-in votes during ballot inspection has been terminated. This process is not required unless the number of write-in votes and under votes tabulated by Diebold exceeds the number of votes cast for the qualified candidate who is on the ballot. Besides being unnecessary, this is very time consuming.

Election Facilities:

We agree with your statement that the space allotted to the Elections Department in the Auditor's office is very limited. Also, the ballot processing area in the basement has a very limited work area and is not adequately accessible to observers.

We have applied for HAVA funds for a modest remodel which would expand the Election Department's work area. Although this will not completely accommodate the needs as outlined in this Review, we are at least attempting to alleviate the issue as best we can at this time. We plan to use the upstairs vault area in the Auditor's office for processing the May 15, 2007 special election, utilizing existing staff and perhaps one of the on-call election board workers. Hopefully this will make the process more accessible for public observation.

Election Calendar:

The recommendation was to elaborate on the elections calendar work tasks to be completed and those completed. The elections supervisor has prepared a new checklist for completing all steps of the election process.

Forms:

Notice to Inactive Voter:

These forms have been modified to include all of the statutorily required verbiage.

Application for Ongoing Absentee Ballot:

All reasons were removed from the form.

Election Certification:

Following is the verbiage as listed previously under the "Recommendation" section of this Review:

Election Certification:

The 2006 Primary reconciliation report submitted did not balance due to a written reporting error. Internal procedures have been put into place so an audit of results will be performed by more than two employees within the office to ensure balancing and proper reporting.

**Conclusion:**

The Auditor along with elections staff has examined the procedures, practices and materials of the County's electoral process. In the Auditor's opinion, significant revisions as to how previous Auditors administered the County's electoral process have been put into place.

With regard to training, the Auditor has encouraged those working with elections to attend as many of the trainings made available as possible. Work is ongoing to have all who work directly with elections be certified in elections by the Secretary of State.

Future plans are for field trips to other election offices to see how they administer their elections as well as viewing their work areas.



## Conclusion

Klickitat County had many out of date and unnecessary procedures. None of these were found to affect the integrity or the accuracy of the election. For instance:

- They have continued tallying individual write-in votes even though the law was changed in this area.
- Some signs used in polling places are out of date. One is left over from when ballots were hand counted at the polls and listed a law from 50 years ago.

The Klickitat County Auditor is encouraged to re-examine the procedures, practices and materials used by the Election Staff.

The reviewer recommends the Election Staff attend all training offered by the Office of the Secretary of State and become Certified Election Administrators.

Additionally, visiting other counties will give the Staff ideas and examples to use to improve the Elections Division. All of these will assist them in reviewing and streamlining their procedures in accordance with election law and current best practices.

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Review Report Prepared by:

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Office of the Secretary of State



Date: March 28, 2007

Signature